



# Breast Health

at your fingertips

*Picturing Wellness Among the Generations  
of the Spirit Lake Native Women*



“*Prevention is the best medicine. We need to take good care of ourselves and do annual physical exams. Most serious illnesses can be prevented with early detection.*”

**Lois Leben**

*Enrolled member of Spirit Lake Tribe*

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Photo from the cover

**Canisha Rainbow Keo**

*Enrolled member of Spirit Lake Nation*

## Three Steps of Breast Health

*American Cancer Society  
Guidelines for Early Detection*

### **Mammogram**

Ages 40 and older: Every year

### **Clinical Breast Exam**

*See a health-care provider for a clinical breast exam*

Ages 20 to 39: Every three years

Ages 40 and older: Every year

### **Breast Self-Exam**

An option for women starting in their 20s



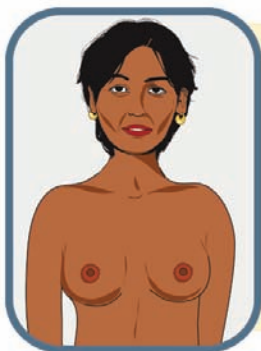
**Jaylee Azure, Denise Frederick,  
Jewel Lynn Azure, Destri Frederick  
& Juanita Giron-Vargas**

**Juanita Giron-Vargas**, mother and grandmother, realizes the importance of doing breast self-exams and getting regular mammograms and clinical breast exams. She encourages her family to take care of themselves.



## Breast Self-Exam

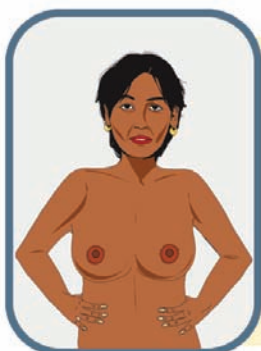
**Look for changes in front of a mirror.**  
*View front and each side in each position.*



Relax arms at your sides. Look for changes in shape and color. View for puckering, dimpling, skin changes, nipple discharge.



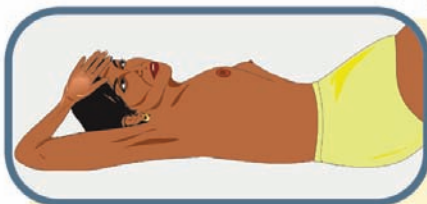
Raise hands above your head; bend forward. Check for puckering, dimpling and skin changes.



Place hands on hips, press down and bend forward. Check nipple direction and general appearance.

Feel for changes lying down. Remember the Seven "Ps!"

## 1. Position



**Position 1:** To examine the outer half of your breast, turn on your side. To check your left breast, lie on your right side and roll left shoulder back. Place back of left hand

on your forehead. To check your right breast, lie on your left side and roll right shoulder back. Place back of right hand on your forehead.

**Position 2:** When you reach the nipple area, keep fingers on skin and slowly roll back into a position flat on your back. Remove hand from forehead, place this arm at a right angle to your body.



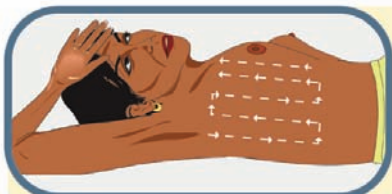
## 2. Perimeter

**All of the breast tissue should be examined within the following borders:**



- From a line (beyond breast fullness) extending from the underarm area down and across to the middle of the chest (middle of the breast bone).
- From two finger widths above the collarbone to two finger widths below the bra line.

## 3. Pattern



Imagine you are mowing a lawn. Use straight, up-and-down, overlapping rows to check the entire breast area. Begin first row under your arm and move downward. When you reach the end of each row, move over about one finger width and start the next row moving in the opposite direction.



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downward. When you reach the end of each row, move over about one finger width and start the next row moving in the opposite direction.

When you reach the nipple, roll back into a position flat on your back. (See position 2 above). Continue examining the breast until you finish a row down the middle of the breastbone. Once you start,

do not lift fingers from the breast.

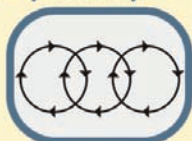
## 4. Palpation



*Use the flats (from the last joint to the end of fingers) of the three middle fingers – do not use fingertips. Keep fingers together.*

Do a series of three dime-sized circles of pressure (light, medium, deep) in each spot.

Keep fingers, knuckles and wrists straight to avoid “gouging” into the breast tissue. “Walk and slide” fingers along so no breast tissue is missed.



## 5. Pressure

*Lumps could be found at any level. Use three levels of pressure to examine each spot carefully.*



**Light** – Use a very light touch on the first dime-sized circle. Don't press. Move the skin but don't disturb the tissue underneath. Pressing too hard right away could make a lump slide out of the way.



**Medium** – On the second circle, use medium pressure to feel for changes below the surface to mid-level of the breast tissue.



**Deep** – On the third circle, feel for lumps deep in the breast tissue. Press as firmly as you can without discomfort. With this pressure, the goal is to feel the ribs.

## 6. Pace

*Go slowly. Take your time. Cover every square inch of the breast tissue. Performing breast self-exam every month could potentially save your life.*

## 7. Practice

*With monthly practice, you can become skilled at looking and feeling for changes in your breasts. Perform breast self-exam every month.*



# Check the lymph nodes...



## ***Lymph nodes drain breast tissue.***

The lymph nodes that drain the breast tissue are located in three areas:

- Above your collar bone
- Below your collar bone
- The underarm area

You will want to know if any nodes are enlarged, movable or unmovable.



Use horizontal rows to check above and below collarbone. Using firm pressure, begin two finger widths above the collarbone. End with last row at the start of breast fullness on the upper chest. Do these rows while sitting up.



When checking the underarm area, relax the arm and shoulder muscles on the side you are checking. One way to do this is to sit on a chair and rest your arm on the table. Reach over with the opposite hand and check all areas of the underarm. Be sure to use deep pressure.

## Important Questions...

### **Why do a breast self-examination?**

There are many good reasons for doing a breast self-examination each month. It is easy to do. When you get to know how your breasts normally feel, you may be able to feel a change. With practice, it should take about 15 minutes each month. Early detection is the key to successful treatment and cure.

### **When to do a breast self-examination?**

The best time to do breast self-examination is right after your period, when breasts are not tender or swollen. If you do not have regular periods or sometimes skip a month, choose a day and do it the same time every month.

### **Remember the ABCs of Breast Health**

**A** screening mammogram

**B** breast self-examination

**C** clinical breast examination

A breast self-examination can save your life. Most breast lumps are found by women themselves or their partners. Most lumps in the breast are not cancer. Any lump or change should be checked by a doctor.

***Early detection is your best protection!***



“*I am a breast cancer survivor, and I believe that if it wasn't for my daughter, LeAnn Alberts, encouraging me to get a mammogram after seeing a Women's Way advertisement, my cancer would not have been caught early. I support and encourage the Women's Way Program and the Indian Health Service in providing mammograms to all women of the Spirit Lake Nation. By doing yearly wellness exams, cancer can be detected at an early stage, and we will be here as a mother and grandmother for our children and grandchildren.*”

**Imogene Belgarde**, breast cancer survivor  
Enrolled member of Spirit Lake Nation



**1-800 44 WOMEN**  
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[www.ndhealth.gov/womensway](http://www.ndhealth.gov/womensway)



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